

ACON HEALTH BOARD MEETING: Nr 1/2018		
Date: 14 February 2018, 6pm for 6.15pm		
Agenda Item # 6	Prepared By: James Gray, Michael Atkinson	
Topic: Gay Hate Dossiers Report and Communication Strategy		

1. Alignment with Strategic Plan

Part 3: Advocacy and Social Inclusion.

2. Background

Over the last 18 months, ACON has been developing a number of dossiers on gay men and transgender women who were thought to have been murdered in Sydney from the late 1970s to the mid-90s. The development of these dossiers has occurred in parallel to the NSW Police Operation Parrabell which has been assessing the same cases for evidence of bias crime.

At the September 2017 board meeting, a content management plan was discussed and approved for the public report on the Gay Hate Dossiers project. This followed from the discussion of the ethical advice obtained from Letts Consulting at the August board meeting. The ACON board accepted a recommendation that a high level report be prepared that de-identifies victims, while ensuring that the report would still acknowledge the horrific crimes that occurred.

The formal writing of the report has progressed since this time and a near to final draft is attached. The writing was led by Michael Atkinson, with support from James Gray and Nicky Bath. Once the first draft was completed, Julie Letts provided editing and structural advice.

The report has been shared with a range of external stakeholders connected to the project, and the following groups have provided feedback: Dowson Turco Lawyers, Professor Stephen Tomsen, Dan Glick, Duncan McNabb, Garry Wotherspoon, NSW Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby. This feedback has been very useful and has helped refine the report in many areas, although not all feedback from all stakeholders could be incorporated.

The report now has the title 'In Pursuit of Truth and Justice: Documenting gay and transgender prejudice killings in NSW in the late 20th century'.

3. Discussion

The report seeks to strike a balance between acknowledge the severe impacts of these crimes and taking care not to directly assert which cases are, or are not, the result of bias. The source material used for the report is not as detailed as that being used by NSW Police for Operation Parrabell.

Therefore, the report speaks to the main themes of violence that was experienced by gay men and transgender women during this period. Nevertheless, it remains a confronting read.

The dossiers themselves are not included within the report and there is no intention to make those freely available to the public.

The report from Operation Parrabell is currently with the NSW Police Commissioner for consideration, meaning that it could be released imminently however it is unlikely that the NSW Police would seek to release this report during the Mardi Gras 40th anniversary celebrations.

It is preferable that ACON release its report prior to the Police, in order to emphasise the separation between the two processes. Therefore we are planning a late-March release of our report. Further detail on the timeline is given below.

In addition to the main report, a communications plan has also been developed and is attached. The communications plan identifies the following key challenges in distributing the report and maintaining stakeholder relationships, while being true to the experiences of the people who were killed.

- Properly conveying ACON's role/remit in leading the project and the report.
- Differentiating the report to other responses to historical violence such as Operation Parrabell and SBS's *Deep Water* series.
- Managing conflicting messages and priorities from other stakeholders.
- Ensuring that criticism of NSW Police is as constructive as appropriate and possible.
- Ensure we are sensitive to survivors and victims, and their families and loved ones.
- Ensure we don't exclude or diminish the experiences of other groups that experienced violence.
- Ensure the next steps include a 'community response'

We will be providing the draft report to NSW Police shortly. This is primarily to ensure that they understand our position prior to release and aren't blindsided by the recommendations. While we are open to them providing feedback, this will need to be handled sensitively.

4. Timelines

17, 22, 24 March	Bondi Walks
21 March	Media Release (exact date TBC)
	Letter to key stakeholders
April	Community and Stakeholder Roundtable
17 May	Community event including a panel of speakers

5. Budget Implication

No changes

6. Risk Issues and Mitigation Strategies

There is the potential for critiques to the content of the report from both the Government/Police and community members. As the report highlights failures in Police practice and the judiciary, a defensive reaction is possible, particularly as the Police Minister is a former Police Officer himself.

In order to mitigate these risks, we will be sending a draft of the report to the Police and will be briefing the Parliamentary Friendship Group on its purpose and recommendations. The report is factual and has clear policy recommendations, while acknowledging the significant progress that the Police have made in recent times.

From the perspective of community, there are those who feel that the Police have yet to be held to account for their failures to act to protect our communities. This group includes many survivors of violence, who retain a significant amount of trauma and anger from the period in question and may look to a report like this to express that anger.

To mitigate these risks we have drafted the communications plan to clearly explain the context and rationale for the report. It will include information on support services for people who are impacted by the content.

7. Recommendation

That the board provisionally approves the near final draft of the Report and the Communications Plan, with any significant changes made afterwards to be notified to the board out of session.

8. Board Action

For noting

For discussion

For decision

9. Attachments: 2

6a Near-final draft of the Gate Hate Dossiers Report 'In Pursuit of Truth and Justice: Documenting gay and transgender prejudice killings in NSW in the late 20th century'

6b Communications Plan